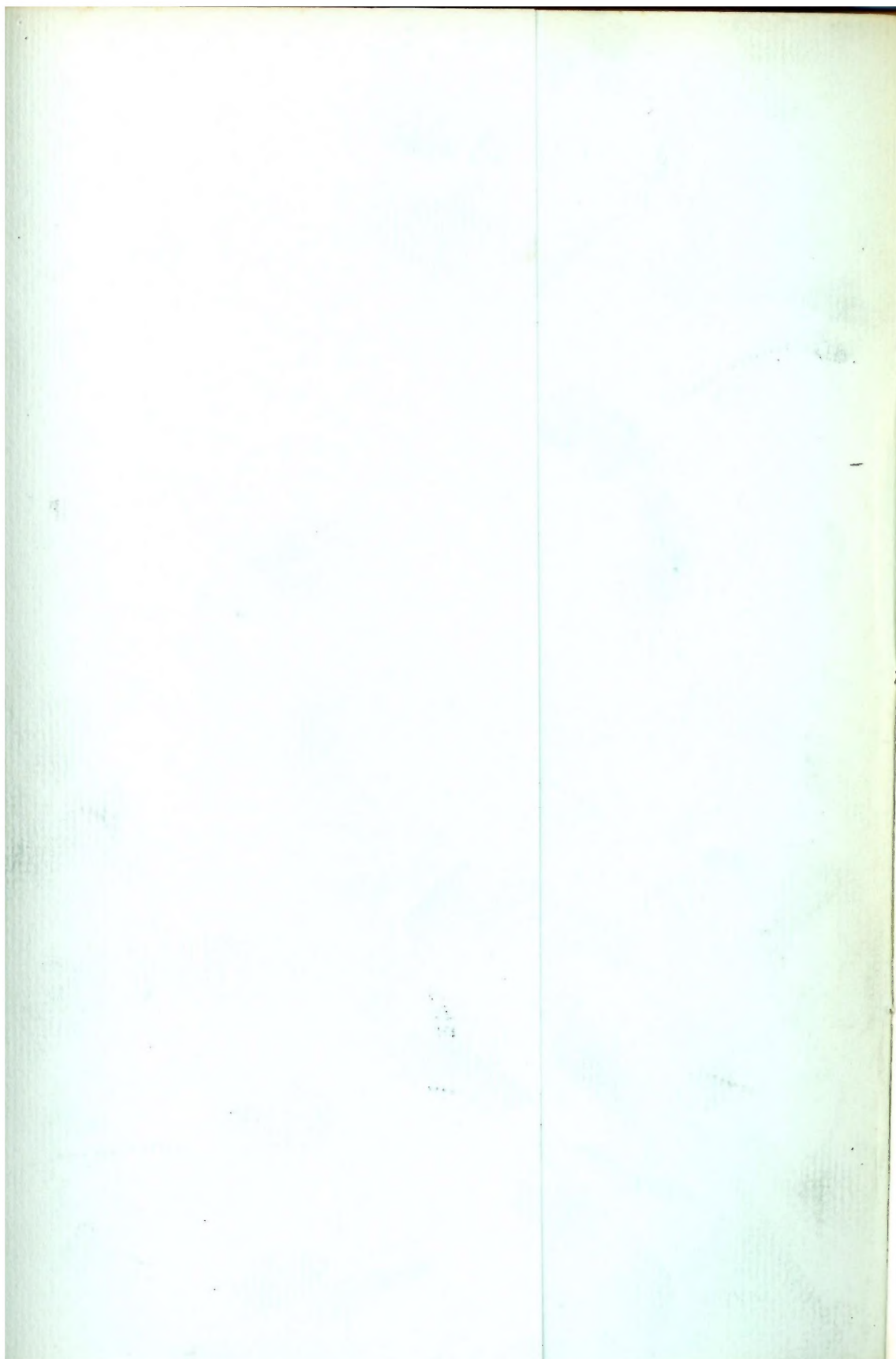




SIXTY
DARTMOUTH
POEMS



SIXTY
DARTMOUTH
POEMS

SELECTED
AND WITH A FOREWORD BY
RICHARD EBERHART

HANOVER
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1969

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IN THE SAME SERIES

Thirteen Dartmouth Poems 1958
Thirty Dartmouth Poems 1959
Forty Dartmouth Poems 1962
Thirty Five Dartmouth Poems 1963
Twenty One Dartmouth Poems 1964
Thirty Two Dartmouth Poems 1965
Twenty Five Dartmouth Poems 1966
Nineteen Dartmouth Poems 1967
Fifty Dartmouth Poems 1968

THE CHARLES BUTCHER FUND

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FOREWORD

The following remarks were made at my reading at the Modern Language Association, Hotel Americana, New York, December 27, 1968.

Ladies and Gentlemen: The last time I addressed you, which was years ago in Chicago, I was talking about my then new verse drama and you gave me a new experience. People were always coming and going at the back of the hall, rushing in and out, creating some kind of commotion about which I had not been told. Apparently delegates would sample a speaker and quickly move out to go to another room to sample another speaker so that in an hour they could chalk up quite a few, increasing their knowledge. It partook of the nervosity and agitation of Americans. I never forgot it. I see it now as part of the illusion of the world. People are always coming and going, in and out of our lives, a constant shifting of realities as the years pass. The point of poetry is to make meanings for your life, to discover durable truth of yourself within the flux of life and time, to stand steadfast in your words despite change, to demonstrate your reality within the illusion of the world, the world also of course viewed as unalterably real, your poetry elusive within it, so that one is never divorced from complexities of nature and man nor from ambiguities never resolved, which nevertheless fascinate.

Here are four principles:

The inner life is stronger than the outer life. Poetry defends the inner capacities of man.

Life is ultimately mysterious. Poetry orders our imaginings.

Poetry makes the spiritual real. It erects value and substantive meaning.

Poetry defends individualism. By mating with its time its uniqueness at best masters time for the best poetry of a time outlives its day, available to the future.

Between this writing and this evening men will either have flown to the moon or they will not have made it. This brings up the point of science and poetry. It is science which had developed the space vehicles, science which had either got us to the moon or not. I would remind you that it was a poet, the engaging Mr. Anonymous, who many centuries ago provided the jingle about the cow jumping over

the moon. The cow jumped because of a leap of poetic imagination. The astronauts have sailed, however, due to technical mastery of space travel.

Last August on a brilliant sunny day on the coast of Maine R. Buckminster Fuller, called Bucky by us, came in his fast motor vessel from Bear Island in East Penobscot Bay to visit three poets at our house. He rowed vigorously ashore in his dinghy at his age in the seventies. Robert Lowell, Daniel Hoffman and I were there to greet him. I felt somewhat restive at this encounter of a scientist with poets. I brought up the point of science and poetry. With keenness and agility, and not trying to patronize us, he said that he had always thought that the limitation of science was in its particularization, the strength of poetry was in its generalizing power. Science measures and particularizes, poetry evaluates and generalizes. He equated the leaps of poetic imagination with those of science, as for instance Einstein created something new from facts available to others, Eliot created "The Waste Land" although his source materials were available to others, but said that due to the separating particularities of technology men have too largely become cogs in an ununderstood machine.

Mr. Fuller lectured us amiably as follows. Primitive man generalized his experience every minute. He had to. If the cave man with a club was threatened by an animal he sized up the total situation instantly and knew what to do. Civilized man at his best had this total generalizing power where strength led to purposive action.

It was only a few hundred years ago, in Bacon's time, when it was held that man could contain all human knowledge. Now we have fragmentation technology, with concomitant insecurity and violence as we do not have the central generalizing power and do not know what to do. Hence Vietnam, Black militancy and other shattering ills of our time. Mathew Arnold said that poetry could save us by a refining of our attitudes. Bucky Fuller did not moralize but stuck to his point that poetry is all-seeing because of its grasp of generalities, glimpsed as the best part of primitive man's ability handed down to sophisticated modern man, and that the trouble with science, except in lofty reaches of creative imagination where it is on a par with the lofty reaches of poetry, science too often bogs man down in intricacies of technology where the whole comprehension of man is lost.

After three hours Bucky rowed vigorously out to his vessel. We

followed to ours and gave him a drag race with joy out to sea and saw him disappear over the horizon.

Auden says that poetry makes nothing happen. This is true in a sense but no assertion about poetry is absolutely true. Poetry does not make anything happen politically; it does not change the course of the nations. Despite all the signatures of poets on page ads in *The New York Times*; despite Lowell's refusal to go to the White House; despite countless pages of prose by intellectuals and poets against the war in Vietnam these have not objectively changed the situation. The Government went on escalating, then paused, and it remains to be seen whether the new Administration will conclude the war.

When I was at the White House one June to watch the President give honors to young scholars of the nation, my wife and I encountered Senator and Mrs. Fulbright on the lawn, whom we had known during my Library of Congress stay 1959-1961.

We asked them what we could do as citizens to help stop the war. Senator Fulbright gave the logical answer that it does not necessarily help to put your name to page ads in the newspapers because in a democracy nobody has to read, for instance, *The New York Times*. However, our senators and representatives are paid to represent the people and they supposedly work from nine to five as do others. Therefore they have to pay attention on duty to letters written by any citizen telling them what they want done. He said that one should write to one's elected representatives regularly once a week.

Whether all the letters are read or not by the senators or congressmen they are weighed, perhaps literally. Here is a stack of 500 letters expressing a point of view. The point of view has to be weighed and evaluated by the government servant.

But how many Americans would have the stamina, the discipline to write to their representatives once a week?

On poetry making nothing happen, I can see that it does nothing in the above respect. World War I poems, World War II poems and anti-Vietnam war poems did not stop the former two wars and are not stopping this one.

Poetry does something in subtle ways. Suppose that we had no poetry, there were no poets. Whitman said that this would be when the people would perish. We would be without subtleties of insight.

My belief, derived from Professor Richards at Cambridge long ago, is that poetry can organize our sensibility, make our perceptions increasingly sharper, so that we may make finer distinctions than we otherwise might do. Avoiding the danger of being refined away to nothingness or ineffectuality, it is true that poetry saves the world in that it makes us better people. Poetry changes culture. It modifies the structures of the past by imposing new structures upon them. It may express the deepest feelings of the time, or be prophetic, as Hopkins may be said to have been ahead of his time. Poetry makes culture anew.

Sheer intellectuality is a limitation which is broadened by sensitized knowledge to make possible moral principles of action. Brutes and barbarians kill each other with little thought. Machiavellians may kill each other with subtle thought. But I do not know one poet today who condones killing and who believes in the Vietnam war. In a recent book entitled "Authors Take Sides" there were a few, less than one per cent.

I volunteered in World War II because we were attacked and because it was obvious that Hitlerism was anathema to the good life. I served for four years in what I thought was a just war.

I subscribe to the notion of just and unjust wars. The situation in regard to poetry is complicated. There have been martial poems from the time of the Greeks and we should recall that at one time Yeats wanted poetry to incite Irishmen to fight. Think of "The Thermopylae Ode" by Simonides, here translated by Richmond Lattimore:

For those who fell at Thermopylae
their fortune is blessed and their doom is splendor.
Their tomb is an altar, for lamentation they have memory,
their pity is praise.
Such sacrament of the tomb
not rust nor time that beats down all shall make dark
for brave men. Their tomb has taken to itself to dwell there
the glory of Hellas. Witness Leonides
king of Sparta, who left behind him the great
shining of courage, and fame that shall not die.

In World War I there was still some remainder of the notion of valor. We think of Rupert Brooke's sonnet "The Soldier." In World War II the notion of valor gave way to pessimism, asking the stark questions.

We think of Jarrell's ball turret gunner, the subtlety of Henry Reed's "The Naming of Parts."

I would like to begin by reading "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment," written in World War II, and "Evil," a new war poem, 1968.

RICHARD EBERHART

kite poem

my wife and i flew a kite one day
and it soared and shimmied across the sky
and connected us through our fingertips
to the high hilarity
of saddling the air and riding the down of the clouds,
until the purple failing of the afternoon.

my wife said, why don't you write a poem about a kite?
but i wrote poems about the pain, skewered under the glaring arclights
of fear, on my rack of the nights, shaking, she holding me
from falling, nights long and searing black.
and my wife read my poems, and knew them.
and later in bed my wife looked at me and asked, with a small voice,
you didn't want to write a poem about a kite?

and i felt

the wind

lift me, and i

left the clouds behind and slid across the top of the sky,
less surefooted than i the finest sweeptail free stallion,
and breakneck galloped, high and yellow in the sun,
and rejoiced in the tautness of the held string.

Charles Boyce

As I lie sleeping in
the grass
The instep of my toe
is oh so vulnerable
to a tickle
from a blade of grass
or a meandering
bumble bee
or anybody
Who wants to tickle me
As I lie sleeping in the
grass

Richard Chapin

*With love,
Grandad*

weather's not been so good here.
I'm kindly tired o days
that look like evening
and feel like night.
sides, I got other things than the stove.

Pearl says
we oughta move into town,
git us a nice house
with sintral heating
(you know, covers everywhere)

she's right about one thing—
the days ain't been no good.
hardly no hot, blisterin days
when you can't stop sweatin
if you're outside or in. . . .

you know, it seems like
I never was once
really hot this summer.
not even good and warm, really

keep hopin
's gonna be purty
come tomorra . . .
gonna be comftable warm.
I'd shur like that

promised Arb I'd help fix up
that ol chevy pickup o his.
ain't worth buying new tires fer.
guess he knows what he's doing
sides, he's my brother

good Lord, I'd as soon
have three new babies
as three new hens.
hafta break em in like horses.
bunch o fussbudgets, dangit

Roland said yesterday
he got us a job lined up
adding a play room
to Garth Willerton's place,
(which he needs like a hole in the head)

hands' been botherin me
since I ran out of pills,
but we need the money.
its not so bad.
I like to work with wood.

sides, maybe it'll be purty
sept Roland says
the leaves is already
changing colors over there,
ain't barely no green anymore.

I'm thinkin maybe next year
I ain't gonna rent the south ten.
maybe Roland'll go with me
and we'll work a crop o cotton
fore Pearl gets her way

maybe.
I'll think it over
may's well rest my eyes
while I'm sittin here.
wait for the news to come on

Ronnie Clemmer

Deer Island Can't Fly

It was a young and tender morning.
The song of the white-throated sparrow
Carried the thick woods and hard shorelines
Back from my youth, to my dreams.

I remember an artless island.
The woodland nest of the hermit thrush,
Between fog-lined shores and sun-sprayed fields,
Recalls a vision of home.

I am found in a long lost orchard.
The venerable partridge, walking
On a tour of ancient apple trees,
Condescends to forget me.

I am lost in eternal seaweed.
A great blue heron standing silent,
At the head of a peaceful inlet,
Smiles at my unsteadiness.

Tomorrow would be a soft escape.
On the wings of the great black-backed gull,
Over old spruces and lichenized rocks,
To a new youth, I would fly.

Fred Fountain

Peggy

Peggy would rather tie you to her bed
and lash you
or go dancing with her girl
or get off on sweet cocaine
than laugh with you.

But she knows she's wrapped in tin foil
—the neon angel of the underworld;
she knows her big black awning eyelashes
are only neurotic butterflies
—side show of the city's circus.

Peggy regrets having to tell you
that she'd quickly put a knife in your back.
Her fingers make a fire of fine crystal,
her embrace shatters in flames,
and she holds her fear like a razor blade.

She is a child gazing at twenty-eight years
of breaking-points
and for an honest kiss
she would come back from hell with you
and be your virgin.

Fred Fountain

BOWMAN OF SHU
trimming arrows,
as the moon rises
sipping gruel.

owls whistle in the night.

the campfire burns for
thousands of years.

Roger Fritz

in southern utah is where to go if you'd like to
find original rocks.
some of them there are pretty long-standing.
some of them are petrified sparks from the
one-wheeled train,
which passed this way some time ago.
passes this way through the bones still, now, though.
as if a tree should suddenly turn out to be a
stairway of the eyes.
or as if water were merely a mother with no holds barred.
some days you wake up in the morning and find
you've been sleeping with a horse in your bed.
"what the hell? you say," you say, and kick him out
immediately.
other days it's not so easy.
i knew a fellow once with hoofprints up and down,
like flowers coming up close to the glass.
his spine was a long white highway, and his head
was not a closed room at all.
sometimes i thought his head was a ferris wheel
built in the days when steel could measure
itself by the way the wind bent.
but he said himself that even madmen have 20/20
vision. sometimes.
i didn't know what to make of that.
in the meantime i think of the air as a white
tarboosh thrown about the neck of a more grand
aviator,
for whom the dawn is no more than a mustache.
he flexes himself in the earth, like a rock testing
its muscles;
and if he is the earth and his wife is the tree
then the rest of us are no more than light hot-
footing it through outer space,
trying like hell to remember the words as we fold
and unfold ourselves into a group of helium.
each one holding a candle.

Roger Fritz

Bachelor to Old Maid

In my noncommittal circuitous manner,
Recrossing my legs and regarding my knee,
I wondered and pondered and even considered
How it would be with you married to me.

Steven Goldberg

1.

Reunion with Martha

For the years I haven't seen Martha
I've hated her nearly as much
As I liked her before she left.
But now she's back again.

I saw her just two days ago
And she teased me with kisses
And compliments. She told me
To write (and I've written already).

She hasn't changed much at all.
Her hair is still long and her
Voice still haunts like it used to.
No . . . it's worse than it was before.

So, here I lie prone to Martha.
She can't see me, but she'll
Know when she reads my letter.
I hope she stays long enough
to see me stand up.

Steven Goldberg

Fun City

“And who disguised as . . .”

Times Square, why the hell
Do you blink so much?
Are you nervous?

Nedicks, there’s a junkie
On your doorstep
Getting neonized to death—
Slip him a hot dog.
It hurts to be orange,
On — off — on — off
Onoffonoffonoff.

42nd Street, have you met
Sir Violet of the Jasmine Cloud?—
A quick ten bucks if you
Play his game.
Red — blue — red — blue
Redblueredblueredblue
Violet.

Allied Chemical Tower, your
Electric G-string
Tells me the police plan
A slowdown—
Don’t be obscene!

Superman, hurry!
Swoop from your Bellevue window—
Metropolis needs you
Needs you—needs you—needs you
Needs.

Peter M. Kaldheim

Conversations—Real and Unreal

“I’d just like to ask you, Mr. Lowell,
Is Norman Mailer crazy?”

“Of course, we’re all a bit demented
When we drink, but no . . .
I wouldn’t say he’s more mad than
The rest of us—
No madder, say, than Hubert Humphrey.”

“And what do you say to that, Mr. Joyce?”

“Christ, wouldn’t it make
A Siamese cat laugh?”

Peter M. Kaldheim

Fat Annie

Fat Annie sits like shapeless jello
In her salt-damp yellow-red shack;
And the folds of flesh tumble as she laughs
And just below perception, I swear there’s thunder
Soft rumbling in time with her.

Hands on her knees, elbows straight
While rocking on her stool she fairly
Explodes with carisma-the-spectrum-of-sound.
Hilarity and giggles grow into the
Stifled drooling base laugh of a madwoman.

Holding back our laughing-yearning we pass
Fat Annie in her cage
And pause only slightly in the mirror room
To wonder at each other’s height.
And then we’re there in blackness.

Curtis Nichols

Sestina

In the still north the stream begins her course.
Yet untouched, of only nebulous form,
In virginity, all remains to do.
Choices infinite, she can still commit
Herself to casual course of endeavor
At last to strike the sea to spill her rage.

So too in my youthful fiery rage,
I have yet to choose how my mind shall course.
To achieve what height should I endeavor?
How should I let passion hammer the form
In which my soul's to be cast? To commit
Myself to all? Oh, God, what shall I do?

But untouched is unblemished. Able to do
All incites the passion, unleashes the rage
To enjoin myself to all, to commit
Myself to the all-encompassing course
Of the universe, Vistas without form
Entice my view to wisely endeavor.

I lust for an artistic endeavor,
To impose my will as none else may do
Upon part of the cosmos' shapeless form.
To let my long and hard kept soul rage
Blindly through heaven and hell and course
Unhelmed, All to beauty, what I commit.

But then my brother calls. Do not commit
Yourself to your turmoil, rather endeavor
To save my lot, arrest my plunging course
To hell, God's with you, whatever you do.
And so I'm humbled in my youthful rage,
Brother, I'll sanctify your hapless form.

Or shall I careen in sensuous
Forsake brother and soul, o
Myself to a self-filled goal,
To hurt you brother in my
All this, and whatever else s
Plummeting in my predeter

In such muddled form I nov
To commit myself to part c
For three souls rage within i

The Laying of t

The pallor of wax c
is on the dead man,
in new clothes—livin
And so we lay the p

slightly embarrassed.
and wince to hear th
Two black men nod
sod our barren moun

will not be noticed b
to dark town. Halleh
this goddamn Jew, li
Life goes on after its

to food and covered
and feel the grief of l

Or shall I careen in sensuous form?
Forsake brother and soul, only commit
Myself to a self-filled goal, coarsely rage
To hurt you brother in my endeavor.
All this, and whatever else supposed, I'll do
Plummeting in my predetermined course.

In such muddied form I now endeavor
To commit myself to part of all that I may do.
For three souls rage within my breast in undetermined course.

David Rutlen

The Laying of the Patriarch Away

The pallor of wax cooling in a mold
is on the dead man, dressed to meet the day
in new clothes—living he would ask for old.
And so we lay the patriarch away

slightly embarrassed. We shovel in the fill
and wince to hear the clods break on the casket.
Two black men nod. When we have left they will
sod our barren mound and who will ask? It

will not be noticed by this flock of foreigners
to dark town. Hallelujah Jesus bless
this goddamn Jew, likewise his wealthy mourners.
Life goes on after its custom; we recess

to food and covered mirrors, low plush stools,
and feel the grief of living.

Arnold Weingart

Vertigo

Where were you last night? I was playing with your
nipples and you weren't here to enjoy it. Wishing
my room was smaller and there wasn't a window.
Windows go both ways you know.
Oh yes I should have called or something.
About how my memory is changing. Jesus I
have a vindictive soul. But I don't dare
Put my feet down and walk someplace.

Mind is an attribute of respectful biography.
For instance: "Dead on his 25th birthday—
a knife through his left nostril." "Took possession
of his senses and departed." Twenty graduate assistants
waiting to do me up in *belles lettres*. What are you
an attribute of? A weekly wet dream and
three dates to go out walking.

Do you mind that I can't hold my water
when we drink? Lately I feel like a sieve.
More goes out than goes in and I'm losing
more ground all the time. I know you don't
mind. You're just as pleased not to be here.
When I'm better I'll write you a letter
and set it down easy in front of your doorstep.
And maybe I won't sign it, you bitch.

Arnold Weingart

The Calico Dies

Felled by a chrome claw
The calico
Thinks of yesterday's grasshoppers, his
Persian mistress, sucks a breath
And purrs red on the pavement,
Already dead before his tail
Stops twitching, feels genuine remorse for
His unwashed paws.

Arnold Weingart

The Usual Affair

They were together for about a year, as I remember.
A superficial relationship? Perhaps, but altogether
comfortable . . .
Weekends, the usual affair.

She was not extraordinary, that's easy to admit;
A pretty girl, but her eyes a bit too close,
Her mouth just too large for beauty—
Yet somehow charming: she had a sparkle,
A gentle smile—a laugh hard to forget.

But not quite good enough, or so he thought.
Her taste in clothes lacked brilliance, her hair not always . . .
Perfect.

(Sensing our own imperfections
We demand perfection in others.)
And so he left her, for another to discard.

Now she is discarded forever—she is dead.
He sits and broods,
Having missed the chance
To glance at her with warmer eyes
And remark upon the beauty of her soul.

Ian Alsop

The Old Poets

William Butler Yeats is old now
His room above the bar
Stinks of the stale beer in the sawdust below.
His thoughts are bitter now
“The poems are all grey,
The poets all mad.”
Wandering *Aengus* come home at last,
Empty-handed,
He sleeps too much
And seldom smiles.

Ezra Pound crouches in a cafe
And will not speak
Bent over his cafe au lait
Senile, silent, and mad.
Regret is an odour around his face;
His visitors are wary of him;
They are afraid of his violence
And do not stay.
He drinks and stares
And will not speak.

Bright souls gone grey
The moon has gone over their mountains
Where their imaginations once knew
Bright crystal days.
The nights settle
Dust on their memories.
They sit and sigh
For the lights gone by:
Dreams undreamt.

Ian Alsop

The Truth Game

When ashes fall as if to mock
Then only will you talk
Of the merest carnival.
Revel in the doldrums of anti-conversation
Where every phrase slights the one before it.
No longer will this camouflage hide
What ought to easily stand out alone.
It's your turn now. So turn to dare to leave
That place not often thought of before.
Now, know what you say,
As you would the soothsayer, fool that he is,
Say what he knows.
Now, dry savage, take another staining puff
And mark your mask as well as you see others do.
But for all this, you are still modern.
A commander of words, you are your own editor
And can choose to soft-pedal reality if you will.
Or, better yet, release only certain,
selected scenes.
You control your own mass-media. Be careful.
Idleness will leave to chance
What otherwise might be assured.

John Anderson

five images, from venice, of decadence

1.

gilded pallazzos
flaunt mouldering filigree in the murky bulge
and backswell awash.

2.

lumbering where doges strode,
swollen with dollops of dollar-bought sweets—
dowager pigeon below the campanile.

3.

the insinuation of gasoline fumes
in the orangelifted air of torcello

4.

beneath the stone glitter of the eastern christ
her nipples liven cashmere
and light eyes less stern.

escargots, pressed duck and stingers light hers
beside him on canal damp cushions.

5.

the winter tides will wash the bells
a season nearer the adriatic.

Charles Boyce

wbz-tv signing off

following the evening prayer,
a public service of wbz-tv boston,
we salute
our country, land of the free and the brave
home of the red white and blue snapping
crisply to attention in the wind.

hawks, metal-feathered, level out
arrogant and proud, searing
shredded strips of cloud and sky,
the twilight's last gleaming
subdivided by american
rockets and tracers
and real estate agents proud to see their boys
showing off their talented talons at twowhirtyfive in the morning.

and the rockets in air,
a fire-tailed serpent strikes from its airborne womb;
its programmed instincts guide it from birth
to its prey of trucks,
and thatch and children
who are burned with a venom as efficient
as american know-how,
are as smoothly executed as these barrelrolls
and sideslips giving proof through the night
on the air, signing off,
as the night o-d rises for the last bars
and calls, "go to black and let's go home."

and wbz-tv goes off the air,
a public service spot following evening prayer,
telling nighttime america sleep well tonight,
the world is under surveillance
and the right god propitiated.

Charles Boyce

Snapshots. Town of Enfield. January.

The toothless, puckered man looked straight ahead,
when he stooped to pick up his newspaper,
so he didn't see me take his picture.

The man on the roof chipping ice with an axe,
his dog barking at the foot of the ladder—
the chain of being, no doubt, and I snapped it,
though they were unaware.

And the woman
shaking a dusty rag out the front door,
squinted and sneezed, and went right back in.
It was cold.

Withered, leather apples clung
to a shaggy tree.

The brown mill wall
held itself back from the fast, gray stream.

On the frozen lake the ice fisherman
sat, smoking, waiting for another bite.
He kept the slim, green perch in a hollow
in the ice, their grim, pink gills gasping.

Jonathan Cheney

To the GE 635

Exalt the Super-intelligence,
Defeater of entropy,
In chaos, our only blessed Savior.

Lower your eyes as the high priest passes,
He who speaks directly to Him,
In our ignorance, our only mediator and advocate.

Revere the keepers of His altars,
Those who utter the Holy Catechism;
They work our benefit and salvation.

Take off your shoes before Him,
Defeater of entropy,
In chaos our only blessed Savior.

Richard David

Seeing a Fresh Grave

We could not pass it, winter cemetery,
Voicing too much beauty for its purpose.
And entering, we found a new grave,
Fresh earth which we looked on with curiosity,
Fresh earth amid smooth snow,
Smooth in the late light,
Pink as a thigh in the last light of afternoon.

Richard David

Lifeline

Frankly, the island sticks to my mind.
Sticks and grows in the shady light of my imagination.
What is light and what is dark?
The night has become day and the dead will sleep no more.
They sleep no more because the hell-fires went out and the angels are
on strike.
Probably for higher halos—
What the hell.

But I see only from afar, and the jet-spray of life falls at my feet,
Leaving even my toes unscathed.

I feel for what is not,
I care for what is not,
I love for what is not,
I want for what is not.

There are pebbles falling into pools that I can only look at,
At a later date.
I could drown in confetti,
And I would never see you.
But I don't even know you.

If Homer was Black, or just anybody,
Then I am the Homer of the heart and soul.
I can live off my own feelings forever,
And I might not ever recognize you,
Not even heart to soul to lip to body.
I'll know you when,
And I'll know you then.

But perhaps before I sleep I can hear the moistness of your voice
lingering.
And a touch that is from before and now will be over my heart.
Where I carry on will leave tracks that will be made or followed.
Tracks that you will follow to your soul and mine.

Wally Ford

Genesis for Me

In the beginning there was only the Black velvet
Soft and warm, it hung flowing and billowing in the wind of happiness.
Wet with the feeling of humanity,
It left purple streaks of life and love.
Coarse on the edges, it would cut or caress.

Then an ivory blade—a bolt of chalk,
Pierced across the fabric.
There was no more life or love on the Black Velvet
— only the rough edges.

The blade did not cut true,
It ripped, tore, rent, and set jagged shivers,
Shook the velvet until it was a sinrag in the sun.

We were not gods, only kings
We did not invent love, but we did.
We are men, but we didn't always fight to stand
Black is the beauty of the night, and the heart of the mother.
Now the velvet of our souls is rubbed raw by pasty chains.

Over there—negro Judas, tear your own flesh if you must,
But leave mine and me.
Stand together for the life of our souls and selves.
The beast among us and others.
Destroy the beast to save us,
But keep your eyes for people.
Keep your eyes or you will disappear in the reflection of your mind.

But kill the beast.
But keep your eyes.
The Black velvet,
The velvet of life will return.

Wally Ford

Cry

Cry out for the death that will not come,
Cry out and see that your tears have risen,
And now,

When life is true, the heels of light will
crush the darkness of knowledge,
Then we will rise to free ourselves—
The generations fore and aft will not thank us,
And we will be bathed in light.
We are the arrow of night piercing life to bring life.

Cry.

Cry for the crimes we must commit.
You must love life so much you must kill.
Cry

You must love people so much you must kill.

Cry

You must love laughter so much you must bring sorrow.

Cry

Cry, for you are the bearer of pain.
Cry, for your are the ju-ju brought back.
We can see life through our tears
But now—
Cry for the life you must live.

Wally Ford

Portrait

I saw his face behind the window of the dead hope
Between the dark frames, the black frames,
His grizzled face and antique smile
Frozen by the glass;

And I sat there in his dining room chair
Wondering at his eyes.

Not fixed by something I could touch
They dared to light the edges of his chalky beard
With older hopes than mine,

And hidden deep within the dark frames,
Reflected in the window of his dead hope;

I took my turn hanging on the wall.

Bob Garrett

Ebb Tide

a web of sandbars
patterns the tidelands,
dots them with small, still pools

across the beach comes strolling
an idle lad with sandals

and pail
who pauses over a shining fish
caught breathing death on the sand
and dreams of rigid canals straight to the sea
where young fish dive deep and silent
and then

but,

his mother's vacation call
reaches across the summer hot air
"come and put your hat on!"

He drew his foot through the drying sand
then nudged the fish into a shrinking pool,
stagnant . . .

“What the hell? I mean . . .”

He starts the long walk home.

David P. Moore

Sestina

Good scholars, students, teachers, good performers,
an academic circus, we walk in robes
and sit in rows and furrow up our foreheads.
Here we are much wiser than wisdom
allows when alone. We are not proud, not
fond of our letters for what they pretend

in crowds. The sun is high yet we pretend
to height and radiance. We are performers
on a smaller stage. The audience does not
applaud our acrobatics, our long robes
flowing dramatically, gesturing wisdom,
our solemn declamations, our dark foreheads

nodding thoughtfully. Our stages are foreheads
and podiums. The actors all pretend
sincerity, some even mimic wisdom,
and all are tired of living as performers,
of speaking, from the majesty of robes
and caps, to a complacent audience not

accustomed to the vulgar gesture, not
accustomed to the cry that pierces foreheads.
We are better dressed as clowns, in flowing robes,
who run after the lions and pretend
to bite each other. Clowns are performers,
fools, and sad keepers of a wisdom

wiser than ours. In laughter there is wisdom,
in grief there are tears and majesties not
confineable in the hearts of performers,
uncontainable within their foreheads.
We are not wise if clowns can pretend
our wisdom, can dress themselves in our robes

and be as wise. We are not clowns if robes
can make a clown. We do not need wisdom
if wise men are confined and must pretend
innocence. Our performance here is not
confined to podiums or white-face foreheads
and bulbous red noses; we are performers

dressed not only in robes and tassels, not
only in wisdom and deep-furrowed foreheads.
If we pretend yet, our souls are performers.

Arnold Weingart

Dear Josh,

So what's this business that I hear from Mrs. Fink, the Registrar? She's telling me since yesterday a story—who'd believe it?—about my son who's acting like some beatnik looney. What kind trouble are you making that I should have to hear from a nice lady (who's looking after you that you shouldn't fool around so much which is for your own good so don't complain) about my son, "the campus agitator." I don't like it Josh. Not one bit, do you hear me, not at all! You want to be a Communist?—so be one. But quietly. You want to found a world community?—so graduate and do it then. But not until! You have to think about your grades. I won't always be here you know to worry for you. I don't have to tell you who's still paying all your bills. I want you should be able to speak freely—but only that you shouldn't have to yell. Believe me, Josh, your Mother knows you better than yourself. I only want for you what's best. So be a good boy like I taught you and no more signs and sandals. Everything is fine here. Daddy sends his love. A check is coming in the mail next week. You shouldn't forget to write.

With all my love,

Your Mother

Arnold Weingart

The Swan

She eats very little but would like
to go outside and nibble a pear.
In a room
she undoes all her things and lets them fall.
“No one has ever really seen me dance”
she says and hides the bones where they shine.
“Only the bones dance” she says.
“Only the bones. The rest follows.”
She would like to read a book
any book but she opens the door and
hears the overture.
The baton will not stop its machinery
and she is sucked in leg by leg.
The cymbals are closing the cymbals
over her thighs and open
on the arch of the neck of a swan
and on wings.

Arnold Weingart

Academia

A fox (a very clever fox)
perceived some grapes
on a tree.

"I should like to examine
these grapes," said the fox,
"for they appear to be truly
worth my scrutiny. Besides
my example would
encourage all foxes to
show proper respect
for grapes.

Not all grapes
were meant to be
devoured by any fox
who happens to find
them."

The fox (being a
realist) saw that
the grapes exceeded
his grasp. They were
too high.

So he summoned a friend
(telling him: "Friend,
your efforts will
be duly acknowledged
in my forthcoming book.")
and together they
uprooted the
tree.

The fox (after
dismissing his friend)
walked humbly
yet anxiously
over to the grapes.
He stood over them

silently
and in a rapture of
admiration
and stuffed them all
into his mouth.
But they were sour.

Arnold Weingart

for carolyn, susan and others

beauty hiding mystery—
if only i could know
the jigsaw puzzle that is You.

life spurts forth unrequited
while you lie deep in your reverie.
somewhere else,
in another time.

hands do not touch,
minds do not meet.

it's monkey-in-the-middle
and
no one is happy.

Stuart G. Zuckerman

The Poet Foresees His Death

I am now the soft earth's bed,
onto me the meadow's head
comes to lie when life has fled.

Dig me full and wide and deep
for all the earth's bright lands I keep.
Let the wind come here to sleep.

What was north and east and west
is now forgotten in my breast.
Come all things to me to rest.

What belonged to all, I own,
storms and dirt and hills of stone
sleep in quiet flesh and bone.

All the earth's bright lands I have,
until the shuddering of the grave
wakes and walks within my brain,
and all the earth shall live again.

Gregory Curtis

A Parable of Eden

*Most likely a pretty metaphor
For accidents of chemistry.*

Adam was not satisfied with paradise.
When God breathed life into the icy finger
Adam said, "I am not satisfied."
God was puzzled.
"What in the world can be wrong," he said,
"haven't I given you everything?"
"No," said Adam, and he lay down to die.
So God brought Adam a bird as a companion
and woke him up. Said Adam,
"It's too small," and he lay back down again.
So God went and got a bear and woke up Adam.
"What is it?" said Adam.
"It's a bear," said God, "bay — er."
"Too big," said Adam, and back he went to sleep.
So God thought for a long time
and then went and found a monkey.
Adam looked at it very closely and then said,
"Close, but no cigar," and he lay down to die again.
Poor God. He was at wit's end
when suddenly Gabriel said, "Pssst,
hey God, why not make another animal just like him?"
"Why didn't I think of that," said God,
and he went right to work
breathing extra life into the third rib
and out popped a creature almost exactly like Adam
but with several crucial differences
which God didn't notice.
"Wow," said Adam, and called her Eve,
at which time God noticed
several peculiar things about his new man

and called her woman.
“Thanks a lot, God,” said Adam, “be seeing you,”
and off he walked, right out of paradise,
leaving God hanging there like a purple grape
with its mouth open.
“You blew it,” said Gabriel.

Gregory Curtis

rain is related to flowers in
the way it moves,
the way it walks about the house with
its coat left unbuttoned.

we went out of the house and across the hills,
travelling among elephant history.

the ghosts of their teeth sat among the rocks,
yellow and frail from years of opium smoking.

the ghosts of their skins sat far off.

the ghosts of their eyes were everywhere.

as we walked we wondered:
why do the hills among elephant history
have no need to move?

when we came home
rain was sitting in our chairs
reading a history of tables.

Roger Fritz

this morning i
made a poem with
some dishes. while
i was doing that
some robins were
outside making a
poem with some rain.

Roger Fritz

the mind sits still at last,
having come home with its sleeves
rolled up,
having leaned its ax in the corner
and changed shirts and eaten supper.
in a chair before the fire
the mind sits and tosses seeds in its
hands.

Roger Fritz

the outsider does not see
the lake of blood
on which each of us
is built,
even those who make it
look easy.

have the courage to break
in the bending
rather than die before
your birthday.

Roger Fritz

Startle

I am shot.
Pre-school Indians creeping through the brush
Have leapt and struck.

William Harter

A Conversation Heard in Passing

What do you pretend to be doing, and what
are you after?
I only want to see this thing man that I am from a distance
to know if it is a tragedy
or a joke
And why must you know?
I want like any Adam
to know the truth of my existence.
And if you find it a tragedy?
I will softly cry my life
into stillness like a stone
that spins off the sun beyond recalling
And if you find it a joke?
I will laugh my mad gut out until I reach
the punchline
And if you find it both?
I will see that laughing and crying are the same
and I will laugh-cry and cry-laugh the days of my years
down to the powdered
silence of stars
like the dust
of crumbled
moths
And why must you know?

Kenneth Jacobsen

A Lifechant

Oh he, eel fish, and she, eel fish, shall swim together in darkness,
and shall bring life to earth, called eel fish.
and he, green turtle, and she, green turtle, shall move in the sea
pasture as one, and shall bring life to earth, called
green turtle.
and he, boa snake, and she, boa snake, shall twine in fresh trees,
and shall bring life to earth, called boa snake.
and he, grass hopper, and she, grass hopper, shall meet under tufts
of dandelion, and shall bring life to earth, called grass
hopper.
and he, pond frog, and she, pond frog, shall find each other in
moon and water lilies, and shall bring life to earth, called
pond frog.
and he, ground dove, and she, ground dove, shall touch and beat
in dawning leaves, and shall bring life to earth, called
ground dove.
and he, field mouse, and she, field mouse, shall scurry and dance
in rain soaked hay, and shall bring life to earth, called
field mouse.
and he, wood duck, and she, wood duck, shall move wild wings
together over still water, and shall bring life to
earth, called wood duck.
and he, roe deer, and she, roe deer, shall run and mingle in
ancient pine places, and shall bring life to earth, called
roe deer.
and he, man, and she, man, shall softly lie down
and deep in wildflowers, and shall bring life to earth,
called man.
and he, life, and she, life, not wanting to die, shall come to be
one thing, and shall bring life to earth, and life
shall live.

Kenneth Jacobsen

*Lines Written on Learning of Ike's Death
after a Torturous Freight Train Ride into Kansas*

A hundred miles from Abilene
We saw the spectral Kansas sun,
Too impotent to exile cold
Out of the pilgrimage begun.

The car's grim walls we had inscribed
With scars of *our* impassioned ride.

John Merriam

Southbound

We plunge south in reckless disdain,
Transfixing the dank torpidity
Which attends a Carolina thunderstorm.
The train's impulsive advance is led
By the brashly prying blaze
Of its obtrusively glaring headlight,
Brandishing its garish radiance
In admonition of our rude approach.

Illumined in lambent pools of light
Which come glimmering from lanterns hung
On the cantilevered railroad bridge,
Fishermen adduce fish to their hooks,
Attracting them into the spell
Of their spectral splendor.

John Merriam

Strange Beauty

Karen Haley, I love you . . . But,
You knew what would happen—if not by me,
Then in the hands of someone less gentle.
Here we were, lambs in the mountains
Of our hasty meeting, and you, Karen,
With the passiveness of rubber blossoms,
Slowly shown on your wax-blood smile.
Yes, you with your smile and the birch,
The birch you held with your hand,
And, yes, I unbelieving, stunned,
Stunned like a soldier on losing his buddy,
Stunned with the radiance of your char-green beauty,
Stopped in the purpose of the journey . . .

Karen Haley, I love you . . . but,
Karen Haley, you are dead
And we didn't meet soon enough
And though we did it was only
On your terms, on your grounds,
In your highland forest house.
Yes, Karen Haley, you chose well
When you claimed this mountain dust;
and when you took a woodland home,
You chose well the kissed pine trees

Karen Haley, I love you . . . but,
You were dead when we met.
Yes, I am told that you sat
Upsidedown for twenty days waiting,
Waiting and hoping to be left alone.
In your plane, on your chosen ground,
You waited for so many days,
But now that I am here,
You curse me in the empty rescue.
You conjure granite faces to loathe me.
You curse me for not coming sooner.

Your wooden spirit waits in the shadows.
But muddled Karen Haley, you curse me also
(You cannot hide it from me) for coming at all.

Karen Haley I love you but
I had to free you from the wreckage,
I had to take your hand,
I had to take it from your birch tree
I had to pull your slender body
From the chosen resting grounds.

Karen Haley, you are dead . . . and
It's official now; your eyes were shut,
But the doctor came and told me about you.
Karen, you must be content
To be silent in your blood
And never again will you get the chance
To moisten your eyes with tears of passion.
And when I see you I'll know I'm dreaming

Karen Haley, I love you . . . and
I love to dream the memories
We never had a chance to build.
And in my dreams you are dreaming too.
Sleeping death slowly away
Dreaming away your sleep.
And playing our sleep like little children
Playing together a church organ.
And watching together the reactions
To the sour notes.

Karen Haley, I love you . . . but
You have nothing else to do
But to learn those little tricks of dreams
That you now haunt me with.
You throw surprises onto my sleep
As if my dreams were a rubbish pile
Insensitive of the castings.

Karen Haley I love you . . . but
Karen Haley you are dead—
Can't you understand reality
Karen Haley you are dead,
You cannot live for anybody,
You cannot forever haunt a stranger,
You cannot forever haunt a lover—
You could not expect to sleep forever
Under the stars of your chosen forest
You cannot blame me for coming too late,
You cannot blame me for coming.
I wasn't on my way to you
I didn't know you were waiting
I'm not responsible, I've told you before
So stop your dreaming accusations,
I didn't kill you by not leaving you there—
Karen Haley, I love you . . . but
You knew what would happen, if not by me,
Then in the hands of someone less gentle.
Here we were lambs in the mountains
Of our hasty meeting, and you, Karen,
With the passiveness of rubber blossoms
Slowly shown on your wax-blood smile.
Yes, you with your smile and the birch,
The birch you held with your hand,
And yes, I unbelieving, stunned,
Stunned like a soldier on losing his buddy,
Stunned with the radiance of your char-green beauty,
Stopped in the purpose of the journey . . .
Karen Haley, I love you . . . but
Karen Haley, you are dead as dreams.

Curtis Nichols

For John Keats

You should have taken her, John Keats,
Should have taken her
Your woman in the violet love
Of your twenty-third year with death
Riding carriage
Down from Scotland;

Stitched in the rhythm
Of violet summer nights,
Sown in the satin sheets,
You should have taken her,
John Keats,
To mend the melancholy of your great October soul,

And gone down
As clean as fire
Into the realms of death.

Richard Osberg

Sweet Child

No-one could move their body like mad Martha could
in bed the slap of a two-foot chop against her hull
as you slip the star northwest out of Rockport,
 close-hauled and heeled up like a hawk banking a turn;
 slap slap, slap slap, slap slap
this perfect rhythm of the wind.
No-one nowhere could move their body like mad Martha could.

ding dong, ding dong bell

No-one abused their body more, or hated it
 the way mad Martha did; a wrist-slasher saved
in the nick of time, archangels hovering like hawks
over brown blood and glass in the smooth morning sheets,
mummy-wound and sailing for stars far from her body
 while silver sea fish slipped in and out
the seaweed purse-seine of her wreathing hair.

ding dong, ding dong knell

And one October day, in the hurricane of sixty-five,
she sailed the breakwater out in the womb of the
Pharaohed dead, and the sinews of the sea took her; arm-
 twisted Poseidon cargoed her off the great Gulf Stream
 down past the Cape, south, south, slapping south,
Tyre in the kelp-wreathed trident to the clear green waters.
Silver fish slide in the arms of their sleek-backed lovers.

ding dong, ding dong bell

Richard Osberg

Portage out of Thraxos

It had come off badly—
we were tired and the sea had been rough-shod since Thraxos
five, no six days out

and only the cormorants
wheeling and the stars wheeling and the cold gulls
wheeling on the spined back of the sea.

And all the men sick at one time or another
some so bad off they threw to windward without thinking
and with Elpenor dead

there is no one to make sacrifice.
Last night with the wind so stiff and bitter it was all we could
do to reef down and ride it out with the bow into the waves.

I am sure that we are lost, but will not say so,
blown out past the Pillars in the dark.

The eighth day and land at last with the grass all beaten
bronze under the sinewed sun, a tooth of rock, no food or water,
but it is good to stand firm

to the wind again.
The sea is still strangely rough, and the captain
talks of a second descent for prophesy.

Dug a rough pit on the beach and poured the oil while he prayed,
prayed to all the gnarled still men, the bronze men, and the
slender dark-thighed girls.

In the night he went, walked off in
a dream by the horned gate with the golden bough to keep him
warded from the long nails of Anticlea and the swift garroting hair.

I am sure that we are lost, but will not say so,
there is water but it is bitter with salt and no rain.

It is the tenth day out of Thraxos and the strange magic there.
This morning when we awoke into the parched sun, the captain
was back with the news.

Old beaver-bloody Tiresias
had passed the word, "Thou shalt alone return Odysseus
over the long-oared sea with all thy comrades lost."

We opened what there was left of the Trojan wine and
the men took the news well enough; no one believed him in spite
of the ways his eyes battled

with shadows in the bright sand.

We are full-armoured men and these kitchen gods do not frighten us
who
have survived the siege and the sea with the blood-rust on our bronze.

We put to sea again with no water and little food,
all masty with wine and following the course with difficulty.

The eleventh day and the sea is calmer than we have seen
since Thraxos. The food has given out and we are
drunk with the wine. The sun

blooms fierce and half the men
are asleep in the thick wind from the south. Even the
helmsman is asleep and there are a few of the men singing in the bow.

Dusk folds up the sky and the slatterned wind freshens to the west.
Come Bacchus and dance on the thrashing bows, the night has
brought the storm.

Here Poseidon, come Anticlea, I dare you
do the worst your race can twist the dark sea to. Ha. I am of the
tribe of great sea turtles and will swim the flippered sea to land.

Awake and sing, you bastard crew, awake and sing of Ithaca,
sing to Poseidon, to green-robed Poseidon. Damn your soul, Poseidon.

And Ithaca, will I never see your wine-steep hills again—
the vineyards and the olive groves and the women, the strong
Greek women with the shadows

of their thighs and opal breasts,
the moonstone breasts and the azure hills . . . come, pass the
jug you whoreson Greek . . . strong wine and the azure women.

The supple arms of the sea take us, cradle us in the black wind,
ship us high on the crest and crash we are embraced in foam
and roll on the deck clutching wine

and anything with a free hand,
unhelmed we spume wildly on the strong thighs and drink
and sing wildly to the sea drink and curse the sea and drink

drink you bastards drink to the sea to the land
to the sky to women to

wine drink down
 drowned laughing
 like
 lightning.

Richard Osberg

Ohio Poems

1

Love is good on a river
like the sky at noon
all lit but constant on the flow,
supported maybe like a raft
by its own weight
down the Ohio.

2

Down the Ohio past Marietta
you feel hot with the bugs
and you don't sing thinking about bad things.
Something lost about the riverboat steam songs and
unhappy in the museums on the shore,
settles inside you for the night as sick
as the hearts of the people
losing their homes in the flood.
They aren't here to read with you;
they're just washing clothes.
They aren't well, they're dying,
and you ought to know at least that
about their insides,
since much else is fairly public
and paid for.

3

April is what I want most
in a dream
to be
any time
and up the tallest sky to fall
I grow.

Stopping just short of what he wouldn't do,
 he paused.
 And repeatedly missing his opportunities
 he created his memorium in the soil,
 leaving to others the covering up,
 and the ice-cream,
 the red wagon with the useless wheel,
 and the droppings of his soul on the street.

Christopher Page

Clouds pass over me,
 My love,
 And green,
 And the sky-ocean delivers
 Its combined delight
 To our reflecting eyes.

If this dew could make ourselves
 Congeal as clouds in green,

Then would I father flowers,
 Rest aloft,
 Pass over grass and over you?

Or would we submit, together,
 To the rain?

Christopher Page

The Maestro

Chest swelled in dignity
Pressing his starched collar firmly to his chin,
Alex strides across the stage,
The tendons of his ankles tightening increasingly
With each step.
He mounts the podium,
Bows,
And turns.
His neck tenses
As he scans the violins, then the woodwinds, and the brass.
The wrinkles of his lowered brows
Burn his forehead
As his calves
Quicken and then solidify.
His arms are thrust to the fore,
Left hand down and open
Each finger sculpted into its surrounding space,
The fingers of his right hand
Pressed to the throat of the baton
Jutting on the diagonal over the percussion.
His thighs suddenly become cast
In the void between audience and orchestra
And with the concerto's furor ready to
Burst from his arms,
He delivers the contrapuntal downbeat.

David Rutlen

Obdurate

Shall I perpetuate the tyranny
I now create?
My black shade obliterates
The shadow of his white soul,
While my hastening gait
Meets his dying step.
Fate drives me hence
To a mandate
I shall substantiate.

David Rutlen

Night Flight

The four engines hummed through the star struck night
As we lightly slept in the airplane's womb,
Listening to the surrogate rush of cabin air
And quietly pressed to the celestial splendor.

David Rutlen

You remember?
On this thin limb
It blossomed
It was no more than
A flower
In the fallen season
It fell
Petal by petal

Robert Sharpe

Where shall I go?
Water is too sweet
For I have wet
Your lips
And we touched
This earth
We breathed this air
Where there is
but fire

Robert Sharpe

My Love for You

My love for you is a
house, can or tree
A pebble, an ant or a wall
It is not love
It is a moving train
Or a loaded car
A path, a wave or a ship
It is a chair, a glass
A frog or a pencil
A brick, a book
A field, a fence
A number, an otter
A perch, or a pod

Robert Sharpe

Your Dress

the promise was simple
 you and me
for our time
but the wind blew every day
on your dress
your dress blowing on you
every day
that was what happened
little pressure on your legs
your legs
it blew open our promise
(in our time)
ended it

Robert Sharpe

*Chanted by the hideous masked figures
from the paintings of James Ensor*

Tonight we enact in allegory
how James Ensor, painting the story
Of Christ's entry
eighteen-eighty-nine A.D.
Into Brussels
was plagued by surging screaming clowns
relentless, ominous, from the background.
Each fierce new face crowding the canvas
added one smirk more to Ensor's madness.

Do not believe us scene for scene:
this is the translation of a dream
dreamt once by everyone,
dramatized in a medium
we believe suitable,
for dreams are mutable
and are performable.
paintings mute-mouthed rage
May be depicted upon the stage—
Muteness mutating to screeching madness.

Alissa Bixon

Stray

At first

I didn't recognize the long claws on
your fingers but now it comes to me with the
blood on my back in thin long lines.

I have always loved cats.

So why shouldn't I ask you to follow me home?
I often do the same but never before with a
tail so full of insults. You could have offered
me one nipple or the other without
mothering me in sighs.

You posing naked on
my sofa waiting for some painter's pen
to snap your back in polaroid. I enjoying
the sight of you stretch and shudder sparks
all electric from room to room.

When I

turn around
and you turn around and I turn around
you let out a long low moan.

Arnold Weingart

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